Kashmir saffron gets GI tag

Kashmir saffron, which is cultivated and harvested in the Karewa (highlands) of Jammu and Kashmir, has been given the Geographical Indication (GI) tag by the Geographical Indications Registry.

The spice is grown in some regions of Kashmir, including Pulwama, Budgam, Kishtwar and Srinagar.

The application was filed by the Directorate of Agriculture, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, and facilitated by the Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agriculture Sciences and Technology, Kashmir, and Saffron Research Station, Dussu (Pampore).

Kashmir saffron is a very precious and costly product. Iran is the largest producer of saffron and India is a close competitor. With the GI tag, Kashmir saffron would gain more prominence in the export market.

About Kashmir Saffron

Kashmir saffron is renowned globally as a spice.

It rejuvenates health and is used in cosmetics and for medicinal purposes.

It has been associated with traditional Kashmiri cuisine and represents the rich cultural heritage of the region.

The unique characteristics of Kashmir saffron are its longer and thicker stigmas, natural deep-red colour, high aroma, bitter flavour, chemical-free processing, and high quantity of crocin (colouring strength), safranal (flavour) and picrocrocin (bitterness).

It is the only saffron in the world grown at an altitude of 1,600 m to 1,800 m AMSL (above mean sea level), which adds to its uniqueness and differentiates it from other saffron varieties available the world over.

The saffron available in Kashmir is of three types — ‘Lachha Saffron’, with stigmas just separated from the flowers and dried without further processing; ‘Mongra Saffron’, in which stigmas are detached from the flower, dried in the sun and processed traditionally; and ‘Guchhi Saffron’, which is the same as Lachha, except that the latter’s dried stigmas are packed loosely in air-tight containers while the former has stigmas joined together in a bundle tied with a cloth thread.

Saffron cultivation is believed to have been introduced in Kashmir by Central Asian immigrants around 1st Century BCE. In ancient Sanskrit literature, saffron is referred to as ‘bahukam’.

Note: You can read the whole analysis about GI Tags @ https://www.aspireias.com/current-affairs/21-04-2020#1670